DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 481 844 JC 030 558

TITLE	Building a Productive Partnership: A Meeting for Senior Executives from Community Colleges, Institutes of Technology and Federal Government Departments (September 25-26, 2001). Synopsis.
INSTITUTION	Association of Canadian Community Colleges.
PUB DATE	2001-09-25
NOTE	26p.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Proceedings (021) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Career Academies; *Community Colleges; Developmental Stages; *Developmental Studies Programs; Developmental Tasks; *Research and Development; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS	*Canada

ABSTRACT

This document discusses how in September 2001, 60 college presidents and 40 senior federal officials met in Ottawa, Canada to discuss different ways to improve Canada's educational system. The meeting was planned in order to strengthen Canada's ability to compete with other nations in the global market. The following are the three main goals of those involved in the meeting: (1) building mutually beneficial partnerships between Canadian businesses and colleges; (2) to familiarize government officials with the needs of Canadian colleges; and (3) to facilitate the participation of college and institute leaders in the federal policy development. This document discusses the various topics that were addressed during the meeting in detail. Those who attended the meeting declared it a success for the following reasons: (1) creating awareness in the federal government of the needs and goals of the Canadian colleges; (2) colleges gaining an understanding of the complex processes of the federal government; (3) the meeting created a possibility of a strong national voice that could help Canada improve its standing in the global market; and (4) the meeting created a desire to make this an annual event that will continue the creation of strong bonds between colleges and the federal government. (MZ)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 481 844

Building a Productive Partnership

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

I. Barbeau

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☛ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

A Meeting for Senior Executives from Community Colleges, Institutes of Technology and Federal Government Departments

September 25-26, 2001

TC030558

SYNOPSIS

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Introduction

On September 25-26, 2001, 60 college and institute Presidents and over 40 senior federal officials responded to the Association's invitation to come together in Ottawa to "Build a Productive Partnership." With many Deputy Ministers, Assistant and Associate Deputy Ministers from various line departments in attendance as well as Policy Advisors and influential bureaucrats, the two-day symposium was a dynamic, targeted and positive event.

Joined by several leaders from the private and public sectors with vital links to the college system, participants explored avenues for building productive partnerships among governments, colleges and institutions to approach Canada's skills, learning and innovation challenges with a greater sense of common purpose.

Noting strategies for win-win situations, clarifying functional processes and discussing opportunities and ways to influence the federal policy-making process, Claire Morris, Deputy Minister, Human Resources Development Canada and Pierre Reid, Associate Deputy Minister, Industry Canada led an interactive panel presentation on the federal government's viewpoint, perspectives and functional realities.

The Honourable Paul Martin, Minister of Finance, addressed the participants and offered a candid assessment of the Government's role in financing post-secondary education. Stating that "education is the meeting place between social and economic policy", Minister Martin responded to several key queries in an informative and lively question and answer session. Regional economic development, applied research, literacy, skills development and the positioning of the colleges vis-à-vis the federal government's specific goals and objectives were of particular interest. The Honourable Jane Stewart, Minister of Human Resources Development Canada, gave a keynote address during which she emphasized the community-based nature of the college and institute system and spoke of the pivotal role of colleges in helping the government develop solutions to skills, learning and innovation challenges.

During small group discussions, college Presidents, federal government leaders and key private sector executives discussed various possibilities for college and institute collaboration with the federal government, significant impediments constraining colleges from responding to these opportunities and the practical steps that can be taken to build a stronger partnership.

Those who attended heralded the Symposium as a resounding success, calling for it to become an annual event. The Symposium resulted in a heightened awareness on the part of key federal officials regarding the depth and capacities of the college system, and a new understanding of the intricacies and processes of federal policy development on the part of the colleges. The event built on the past advocacy efforts of Association and served as a bridge towards an even stronger national voice - a voice that is actively sought and encouraged at the federal level.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Goals

- To explore avenues for building productive partnerships among governments and colleges and institutes and approaching Canada's skills, learning and innovation challenges with a greater sense of common purpose
- To acquaint senior government officials with the capacities and needs of Canada's colleges and institutes of technology
- To enable college and institute leaders to participate more knowledgeably and actively in federal policy development

Rationale

Strengthening Canada's ability to compete in the knowledge-based, global economy has become an overarching priority of the federal government. Community colleges and technical institutes are the country's largest supplier of post-secondary and adult education and training, with 2.5 million full- and part-time learners with presence in over 900 communities. Clearly, they will play a critical role in building a more innovative, productive economy, helping Canada rise to the challenge of global competition.

Unfortunately, federal government leaders and their counterparts in colleges and institutes often work in isolation from each other. The vast majority of senior federal officials are university educated and, with the devolution of workforce training responsibilities to the provinces, an important linkage to the college and institute community has been lost. At the same time, college and institute leaders quite naturally invest more time and energy cultivating relationships with provincial officials than with people in Ottawa.

Overcoming isolation and encouraging leaders from federal departments, colleges and institutes to work with a greater sense of common purpose will improve the supply of skills and knowledge on which our economic and social development increasingly depend.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

How Government Works

For community college leaders, an important first step to interacting more effectively with the federal government is to understand how government works. As such, ACCC launched the meeting with a briefing session to bring colleges up to speed on the intricacies of federal government decision-making. We had three excellent presenters: André Juneau, Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet, Huguette Labelle, recently retired and a 20-year veteran of the Deputy Minister corps, and Maryantonnet Flumian, Associate Deputy Minister, Human Resources Development Canada. The following are the highlights of their remarks:

Deciphering the Federal Agenda

- To stay abreast of the Government's priorities, read key documents such as the "Red Book," the Speech from the Throne and the Budget. Follow speeches by senior Ministers and visit the websites of key departments.

- Government priorities and fiscal plans may shift in response to significant "changes in context" such as the September 11 terrorist attacks or a powerful lobby effort on a "broadly recognized need."

Who is In Charge?

- Cabinet and the two Cabinet Subcommittees (on the economy and the social union) rule the agenda setting and implementation process.

- Ministers establish priorities for their Departments, set the tone for relationships with client groups and decide what their Department will take to Cabinet.

- Cabinet deliberates in secret to sustain the tradition of "Cabinet solidarity." Any Minister may speak on any issue. The Ministers' Departments (particularly Deputy and Assistant Deputy Ministers) brief them on all issues that will come before Cabinet.

Who has Influence?

- Cabinet is influenced by political players, including the Prime Minister and individual Ministers, and by key political staff. Central Agencies such as the Privy Council Office (federal-provincial considerations, Cabinet priorities), the Ministry of Finance (fiscal and economic considerations) and the Treasury Board (management issues) are also influential.

5 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

- MPs (and Senators) are the political eyes and ears of the government. They share what they hear in their ridings with Ministers at weekly caucus meetings.

- Precedent and legislation guide Ministers in making many of their decisions. They may also be influenced by recommendations from the Auditor General and the Access to Information Act.

- Ministers commission and listen to pollsters and to the tone and volume of media coverage of their issues.

- Ministers rely on their departments for detailed technical briefings on all issues that reach Cabinet.

How to Influence Decision-Makers

- Make personal contacts and cultivate continuing relationships with Ministers, Deputy and Assistant Deputy Ministers and Ministerial Staff in central agencies (Finance, PMO and PCO) and line departments. Don't wait until you have a problem to build relationships.

- Approach Ministers and officials with solutions rather than problems and, wherever possible, attach a "realistic price-tag." "Show them how you can help them to succeed."

- Try to give Ministers and officials a sense of involvement or ownership in your institution. Invite them to speak at your annual meetings and to join your advisory councils. Cultivate champions in political and public service ranks.

- Cast a broad net. The skills, learning and innovation agenda will engage most of the players. Any Minister or senior official can be a useful ally.

- Respect the "rhythm" of departments and the system as whole. If you want to influence the February budget, you have to start preparing the ground the previous winter and "have all your homework done by October."

"The silent majority does not make public policy – the vocal majority does."

"The colleges need to work on how to influence the budget process by learning how to manoeuvre."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Dinner Meeting with Deputy Ministers

The purpose of the evening session was to identify opportunities for colleges and federal departments to collaborate in addressing the skills, learning and innovation challenges facing Canada. To set the context, the session began with a federal government and a community perspective on these issues.

Federal Government Perspective

Avrim Lazar: Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy, HRDC
Chummer Farina: Executive Director, Advisory Council on Science and Technology

- The past 10-15 years have seen a growing cleavage between "have's" and "have-nots" in Canada. Aboriginals, people with disabilities, single parents and recent immigrants make up the bulk of the long-term poor.
- With a smaller youth cohort ahead, labour force growth will depend increasingly upon immigration, but the world market for skilled immigrants is becoming highly competitive. We need new immigration strategies to attract the best and brightest, and integrate them quickly into the workforce.
- As we move from a labour surplus to a labour shortage, we need more efficient school systems. We can't afford to have 18 percent of our kids "not predisposed to learning" or 25 percent of high school graduates rejecting post-secondary education.
- Nearly 50 percent of the people who will be working in 2015 are already working today. Yet participation rates in adult education and training are flat while skill requirements are rising.
- For individuals, firms and the country as a whole, becoming more innovative is the key to closing the productivity gap with the US and adjusting to the pressures of globalization.
- Canada has a long history of under investment in R&D and a poor track record in translating new knowledge into new products and services. The research capacity of post-secondary institutions is a real concern.
- Highly qualified people are a vital building block in the new economy, but the production of highly qualified people in Canada has stagnated. This will compound the faculty replacement challenge in colleges and universities over the next decade. We must increase enrollments in Masters and PhD Programs, attract more highly qualified people though immigration, and upgrade the skills of those now working.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The College Perspective

Robert Gordon, President, Humber College
Terry Weninger, President, College of New Caledonia
Jean-Denis Asselin, Director General, Cégèp de Saint-Jérôme

- There are 2.5 million learners in Canada's community colleges today. Only 30 percent of high school graduates go to universities, "we handle the rest."

- From province to province, there are enormous variations in college programs, stature and linkages to universities. As a result "we may be difficult partners for federal policy-makers." Most federal officials have university degrees.

- Colleges are low on the academic pecking order. Federal programs such as the Millennium Scholarships and Research Chairs were aimed at universities.

- When the federal government tries to flow funds through to the colleges for things like apprenticeship programs, the provinces object. When Ottawa gives money to universities, there is no problem.

- Colleges are good at identifying provincial workforce priorities, but not national priorities. We need better labour market data to improve our programming.

- Colleges get less money than universities, but we operate more cheaply. We are also more accountable for the funding we receive. If our graduates don't get jobs, we have to change our programs. We produce the people that will be needed in tomorrow's labour market.

- Rural and remote colleges are effective engines for community development. We have a track record of success and our network is available to help the federal government help remote communities.

Dinner Group Reports

The Conference moderator summarized the key issues that had been tabled during the context presentations. In setting the tone for the dinner discussions, Dr. Stuart Smith noted that the federal government "once operated successfully in this sector" but that the practice of "buying seats" in community colleges was stopped when the two levels of government could not agree on "sharing the credit" for these expenditures. The way to rekindle this partnership, he suggested, was to develop programs which address concern about skills development and innovation, but do not "offend the political sensitivities of certain provinces." Dr. Smith saw promising opportunities for new partnerships to evolve in areas such as:

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

- adult education and skills upgrading;
- lifelong learning (labour codes, tax treatment, etc);
- skills upgrading and certification for immigrants;
- portability of academic credits and national standards;
- online learning; and,
- research and equipment for research and training.

Dr. Smith urged participants to be creative in examining these possibilities over dinner. Participants broke into dinner/discussion groups to consider three questions around relationships between community colleges and the federal government. **The following are some of the conclusions that they reached.**

1. WHAT ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES WHERE COLLEGES AND INSTITUTES CAN COLLABORATE WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT?

The dinner groups enthusiastically endorsed stronger collaboration between colleges, federal departments and other players in the learning system. They saw a natural fit for colleges in the government's skills, learning and innovation agenda and in several other important policy areas. There was some surprise at the scope and number of successful partnerships already in place involving colleges and federal departments. At the same time, there was a unanimous view that there are real opportunities to do much more. Among the areas that are ripe for collaboration, the following attracted the most attention.

Building a Learning Culture

Participants noted that colleges are accessible to youth and adult learners in all regions; that they address the whole skills development continuum from basic literacy, to liberal and applied arts to advanced technical training; and that they can adapt quickly when global markets demand new skills and knowledge. Participants agreed that community colleges must be front and centre in any national skills, learning and innovation strategy and that the federal government can and must work with the provinces, ACCC and other groups to help colleges acquire the faculty and infrastructure needed to play this important role.

Academic Mobility and Recognition of Credits

In several groups, participants called for stronger protocols to encourage the mobility of faculty and students and portability of academic credits across provincial/territorial boundaries. They did not want the federal government to set curriculum standards, but to work with colleges, business and labour on identifying the occupational standards and skill sets requirements for trades and other programs that would allow for Pan-Canadian recognition of college credentials. Participants strongly believed this would boost program quality and help labour markets to work better. On top of this, as one group pointed out, "HRDC would be more likely to fund programs whose graduates could work in every province!"

9 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Prior Learning Assessment for New Canadians

In light of skills shortages in some regions and sectors, several groups discussed the need to integrate new Canadians into the workforce faster and more effectively. As one group put it "there are a lot of under-employed immigrants who are being exploited because there is no national system of assessing their education and skills properly." Participants noted that colleges have a good track record in prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) and believed that federal funding could expand PLAR capacity across the country. They also believed that strong federal leadership would help to counter resistance from professional associations and provincial licensing bodies that are "very protective of their turf."

Sector Councils

In several groups, participants noted that sector councils, such as the Canadian Steel Trade and Employment Congress, have worked closely with community colleges to develop successful industry-specific training programs. They believed that this approach could be expanded and extended to literacy training, skills upgrading and adult education more generally.

While endorsing sector councils as a useful meeting place for colleges, business, labour and federal departments, participants cautioned against a "one size fits all approach." They encouraged policy-makers to explore other community-based models for program delivery where appropriate, and cautioned federal departments not to "straightjacket" potentially valuable partnerships with overly rigid funding requirements.

Encouraging sectoral approaches at the local and regional levels and linkages to national bodies, where they exist, was recognized as a valuable complement to national sectoral approaches. Linking sectoral approaches to the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and college program advisory processes were seen as important next steps.

Aboriginal Youth

With young aboriginals forming the fastest growing portion of the youth population, several groups noted that helping native youth acquire workforce skills and boosting their post-secondary enrolment rates must become a priority for the federal government. Participants believed that location, adaptability and diversity of programs gives colleges a comparative advantage over universities in responding to the education and training needs of First Nations people. They felt that the federal government must exploit this comparative advantage during the coming decade.

E-Learning

Most participants agreed that with well-developed course material and broadband access, "e-learning" could help Canadians rise to skills and learning challenges, particularly in remote communities. They saw content development as the logical domain of community colleges and underwriting infrastructure costs as an appropriate federal role. There was also interest in collaborating on a national consortium to develop and market e-learning products at home and abroad.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Support for SMEs - Regional and Rural Development

The potential role of community colleges in delivering support services to SMEs came up in several group discussions. Participants noted that most colleges are already well networked in their local business community (including the agricultural sector) and are thus well positioned to supply basic and advanced skills upgrading, management counselling, applied research, problem solving, technology and other services to SMEs either directly or through sector councils. They also felt that the potential of colleges to "incubate" new start-ups should be explored as a potentially useful adjunct to the government's regional, rural and northern development agenda.

Support for Research

Federal support for "pure" research is, by and large, centred in universities and bypasses the research strengths of community colleges, which are centred in applied research, commercialization and technology. Many felt that the practical problem solving orientation of community college research can make an important contribution to productivity growth; to helping SMEs harness new technology; and, to addressing innovation and regional development priorities.

2. WHAT ARE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT IMPEDIMENTS THAT CONSTRAIN THE COLLEGES FROM RESPONDING TO THESE OPPORTUNITIES?

One overarching conclusion emerging from the dinner discussions was that the capacities of community colleges to address skills shortages, productivity growth and other important issues are not being fully exploited. One group suggested this was because "there no sense of national crisis" to lead policy-makers or colleges themselves to "step up to the bar." A more prevalent view, however, was that the colleges and federal departments simply don't know or understand each other well enough to jointly address key national challenges. Against this general backdrop, the following issues attracted attention.

Funding

Participants recognized that provincial governments will always be a primary source of funding for community colleges and that provincial contributions will "never be what we want them to be." Still, there was a strong view that federal programs offering flexible, long-term funding are essential to meet the skills and related challenges facing Canadians; to serve special needs such as those of aboriginal and remote communities; and, to accelerate skills updating for the existing workforce.

Federal Provincial Relations

There was a very strong consensus that Ottawa and the provinces have legitimate roles to play in post-secondary education. At the same time, participants felt that "buck passing" and a failure of the two levels to coordinate their involvement in community colleges was seen as counterproductive and costly. As one group put it: "The systemic inter-governmental challenge between Canada and each of the provinces is a real impediment. Local priorities may not always align with federal

programs. Generally, it is a process of disagreement." Beyond this, there was also a strong sense that fear of offending the provinces had left federal departments far too timid in their interactions and financial contributions to community colleges.

Data Limitations

Several groups noted that the accurate and timely regional and subregional desegregated demographic data needed for long-term planning and to align college programs with national learning priorities is simply not available.

One group also identified a significant data limitation in relation to research. They noted that colleges do not track research nearly as well as universities and that there is no clear documentation of the nature, scope or volume of research that colleges are doing. As the group pointed out "good data is essential to back up policy proposals."

Funding of Research

There was also a strong suggestion that colleges missed out on federal research funding because Industry Canada and the granting councils do not adequately recognize the value of applied research, particularly in the context of technology transfer to SMEs.

The Image of Colleges

There seemed to be a widespread view among participants that Canada's community colleges have an image problem. They are seen as the "poor cousins" of post-secondary education, who do not stack up to universities when, in fact, they are very different from universities and have different strengths. As one group put it: "unlike the universities, colleges have no branding" and, as a result, they suggested that federal officials engage universities on issues which colleges may be better placed to address.

3. WHAT ARE THE PRACTICAL STEPS REQUIRED THAT WILL ENABLE COLLEGES AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO SEIZE THESE OPPORTUNITIES AND BUILD STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS?

With a strong consensus that colleges should move closer to the centre of the federal skills, learning and innovation agenda, participants offered some ideas and action steps.

More Educational Meetings

Participants suggested that ACCC distribute an account of the evening's discussion to leaders from colleges and federal departments who were not able to attend. As a follow-up, ACCC should arrange briefing sessions to familiarize officials in key federal departments with the capacities of the community college system. Similarly, a wider group of college leaders should have an opportunity to learn about the federal government.

Decentralized Approach in Government

Departments should encourage regional and local officials to build relationships with colleges to counter the perception that to participate in federal policy development "you have to go to Ottawa."

Develop a Business Case

Colleges need to develop a strong, data-backed business case if they want to establish themselves as a national vehicle for federal programming. "If they can't deliver what Canadians need with current funding levels, build an articulate case for more funds."

A Research Chairs Program

Develop a network of chairs in applied research programs specifically for colleges. This would help to alleviate the "image problem" and address important innovation and productivity issues, particularly with SMEs.

Chairs in Skills Leadership

Create a network of "skills leadership chairs" in colleges similar and parallel to the research chairs given to universities and " foster a bigger educational pie" in Canada.

International Students

ACCC, Foreign Affairs, Industry Canada, HRDC and Citizenship and Immigration should cooperate in marketing Canadian education services overseas and in recruiting international students. We should recognize that we compete for top-flight international students with the US and other countries.

Getting Around Federal-Provincial Relations Barriers

ACCC could partner with the federal government to develop national skills training programs to be delivered by individual colleges. Remember the "College Canada" idea from a few years ago.

Deal with Data Problems

Statistics Canada should expand its collection and analysis of demographic data to enable colleges to plan more effectively. Furthermore, it must accelerate its work on acquiring and reporting meaningful, current and timely data on the colleges - putting equal priority on data reporting similar to that accorded the university sector.

Create a Skills Council of Canada

"We have a Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), where is the Skills Council?"

Establish an ACCC Sectoral Initiatives Unit. To further enhance the interface of colleges with sectoral studies and councils, HRDC should support the establishment of a Sectoral Initiatives Unit within the ACCC secretariat.

A National Program to Support Competency-Based HR Planning

Develop a national program run by colleges and business to assist SMEs to undertake competency-based human resource planning and skills development and support innovative, experimental initiatives.

Develop a program to support the improvement or establishment of career information centres in colleges. The program could be led by the Association of Canadian Community Colleges in collaboration with the sector councils and could be funded by HRDC.

Create a program, managed by ACCC and financed by HRDC, to support applied research initiatives in competency-based training whereby colleges could submit project proposals in collaboration with business groups.

Incubator Projects

The federal government should fund "incubator facilities" where colleges, private industry and government can work together to support new business start-ups.

"Universities are supply driven, colleges are market driven - this should be explored as great opportunity for the federal government."

"Excellence means what you are good at. We have to go beyond language – excellence is that [colleges] are [located] all over Canada. This is a big strength of colleges."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Breakfast Meeting with the Hon. Paul Martin

After some brief opening remarks, Mr. Martin opened the floor for an exchange of views and ideas with participants and touched on the following areas:

State of the Economy

Mr. Martin stated that slower economic growth and new spending priorities in the wake of September 11 will dictate a less expansive February budget than initially anticipated. However, he emphasized that the long-term outlook remains positive and that Canada is well positioned for success when growth returns.

The Government's View of Community Colleges

"We see education as the meeting ground between social and economic policy" and recognize that community colleges offer "a huge part of the answer" to the skills development and productivity challenges we face.

The federal government understands the enormous contribution that community colleges have made to rural and regional development by extending learning opportunities beyond the cities. But "it's going to take new ways of thinking" to maximize the contribution of colleges to other areas.

Research Funding

Several participants pointed out that colleges have not been terribly successful in tapping into federal programs, such as the Canada Fund for Innovation (CFI), which are more suited to the "pure" research orientation of universities. As one put it: "We are all committed to excellence, but we see it differently from universities. The number of publications in learned journals is not relevant to us." Another added, "We need the government to recognize that we can contribute more to the future through the application of knowledge than the creation of knowledge."

Mr. Martin was clearly sympathetic to this argument and allowed that "the role of colleges in applied research is probably not well understood in federal departments." He suggested that federal support for applied research would likely require a new model, different from the CFI and other

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

initiatives. The Minister urged colleges and ACCC to pursue this angle with federal departments. He advised colleges not to let the federal government define "excellence" in ways that don't reflect [their] strengths.

Access to Post-Secondary Education

In response to a question regarding the Millennium Scholarship program, Mr. Martin acknowledged that there is still a lot to do on access issues and that maintaining high levels of post-secondary enrolment was a priority for Canada and one that the federal government would have to pursue with the provinces.

Literacy and Basic Skills

While welcoming prospects for increased funding of applied research activities, several participants emphasized the strength of community colleges in "closing the development gap" which separates people with poor literacy and basic skills from the first step on the "escalator" to high level skills.

Here too, the Minister was impressed with examples offered in which the colleges had closed the "development gap between where the people are and where programming starts."

First Nations' Education

A First Nation's participant pointed out that aboriginal participation rates in the labour force have been very low but that aboriginal experience with community colleges has generally been positive. As he put it: "Colleges are part of the answer for us. We need to make people in Ottawa aware of this."

Mr. Martin responded that a special Cabinet subcommittee on relations with First Nations has just been formed and that "education will be a big part of it. I want you to meet with members of the subcommittee."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Perspectives on Skills, Learning and Innovation

To throw additional light on the issues surrounding the skills, learning and innovation challenges facing Canada and how colleges, federal departments and other organizations might respond, the group heard from three technical experts.

Gilles Rhéaume, V.P. Policy, Business and Society, Conference Board of Canada

Mr. Rhéaume briefed the group on the findings of the Conference Board's *Performance and Potential Report 2001-02* which tracks 40 social and economic indicators and benchmarks Canada's performance against the United States, Germany, Japan, Sweden, Norway and Australia.

The report noted that Canada is an average performer compared to our competitors; that we were above average in only one category (labour markets) and a poor performer in education and learning. While acknowledging that Canadians still lead "privileged lives," the report concludes that our relative living standard is declining and that, in comparison to our peers, we can and should be doing better.

In its "call to action" for Canada, *Performance and Potential 2001-02* emphasizes that:

- developing a learning culture is simply not a priority for Canada, our literacy is too low;
- companies must invest more in employee learning;
- we have to lower the high school drop-out rate and boost math and science skills;
- there is a "crisis" in our apprenticeship programs; and,
- education-employer partnerships must expand.

Mr. Rhéaume noted that in the increasingly integrated North American economy, American policy is the "default" policy but that Canada can chart its own course where "the Canadian way creates a competitive advantage," such as in health care. On the other hand, where the Canadian way exacts a toll on our competitiveness, "we have tough choices to make!"

Scott Murray, Director General, Institutional and Social Statistics, Statistics Canada

In briefing participants on how Canada has to address changes in the demand for labour market skills, Mr. Murray noted that:

- In the past, Canada responded to the growing demand for high order skills through public investments in education, which led to world-leading post-secondary participation rates.
- Smaller youth cohorts in the coming years will make it very difficult to increase post-secondary participation rates beyond current levels
- Some of our competitors are catching up in college and university enrolment rates.
- These factors place a premium on upgrading skills in the current workforce, particularly literacy skills that are the foundation for further learning. However, our track record in employer-sponsored training is not good.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

- Our investment in "blue collar" training is above the OECD average, but below it for the faster growing "white collar" professions.
- We also train the people who are easiest to train. Low skilled people, the ones who need training most, are least likely to get it.

Mr. Murray also touched on the issue of data collection for the post-secondary system. He noted that community colleges have not been good data filers and, for example, have not taken part in faculty surveys. He suggested that better data would "increase the visibility of community colleges" for federal policy-makers and provide a rationale for federal involvement in issues such as faculty replacement. It was noted that the "data tools for colleges were significantly flawed and that they were working to implement more relevant and credible mechanisms."

David Stuart-Patterson, Senior V.P. Policy and Communications, Business Council on National Issues (BCNI)

Mr. Stuart-Patterson offered two broad prescriptions for improving productivity growth and economic performance. Generally, these focused on taking steps to:

- boost investments in new technology by improving the business and tax climate (e.g. capital taxes in the Republic of Ireland stand at 25 percent of Canadian levels).

- improve the supply of human capital by improving access to quality education for young people and lifelong learning for adult Canadians.

The BCNI believes that community colleges have an important role to play in the human capital element of this prescription. "You are in every part of the country, that makes you part of the answer to the access challenge." Mr. Stuart-Patterson also felt that businesses would support an expanded role for community colleges in applied research and in helping SMEs covert new ideas and technologies into new products and services. He advised colleges to highlight their strengths to government departments particularly in areas such as e-learning and regional development. In his words "we need an innovation-based regional development strategy – this means you."

The BCNI believes there is broad public and business support for increased spending on education and research and that once the tragic events of September 11 work their way through the system, governments will be ready to invest more in human capital and innovation.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

How Do We Get Our Message Across

Given the objective of learning how Ottawa operates and how community colleges can influence policy-makers, the group heard presentations from three people who have put their organizations "onto the federal radar screen."

André Piché, Senior Policy Analyst, Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB)

Mr. Piché described the CFIB's seven-step approach to shape public policy in the interests of its 100,000 members.

- Identify issues that will interest our members.
- Formulate questions for member-surveys.
- Analyze data and develop a CFIB position based on survey results.
- Develop a strategy for affecting change.
- Political action – we write to every MP with our results and we include for every MP specific comments from businesses in their riding.
- Talk regularly with Ministers and officials.
- Develop a national media strategy to compliment our political action.

Mr. Piché emphasized the need for colleges to develop the capacity to collect data and undertake policy research in order to present well thought out policy proposals to federal departments. He also stressed the value of building coalitions with other organizations, such as the CFIB, in trying to influence government policy.

Sheldon Ehrenworth – Executive in Residence, GPC International

Mr. Ehrenworth offered several points of advice on how ACCC and colleges can influence the public policy agenda. These included:

- "Don't just deal with policies that affect you," develop positions and talk to government about issues across the whole policy spectrum.

- Colleges should look for ways to exploit public opinion which clearly support a federal role in education.

- Universities think they are at the top of the learning hierarchy and that their position is unassailable. "As long as they believe their mission is to prepare young people for life, there will be opportunities for colleges which prepare young people for life *and work*."

- You have to understand the culture of the federal public service to influence it. There is more of a division between the political and bureaucratic elements in Ottawa than in the provinces. You have to influence both Ministers and officials.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

- Public service is inward-looking and secretive as opposed to outward-looking and collaborative. Current reform attempts are aimed at fixing the plumbing, not the culture.

- "We are changing the culture of government with this meeting – keep it up. You can use this kind of meeting to educate bureaucrats. By and large, federal officials are competent, but isolate. You can help."

Al Hatton, Executive Director, The Coalition of National Voluntary Organizations (NVO)

Ten years ago, NVO was "misunderstood and unappreciated by federal Ministers, MPs and senior officials." Today it is an effective, influential player in federal policy and decision-making. Mr. Hatton drew on this experience to offer the following advice to ACCC and member colleges.

Getting in the Door

- Develop a vision, a clear agenda and remain consistent.
- "Always be able to explain why your position is in the public interest – link your issues to government priorities and broad public concerns."
- Compromise on strategies and priorities, not on principles.
- Define your issues. Be factual. Identify who the key decision-makers are and learn about the world they work in. Develop trust within your own community and with your partners.
- Be constructive. Don't just criticize; offer alternatives.
- Be prepared to accept incremental gains – stick with it.
- Find a champion and "don't forget to say thank you."

Lunch with the Hon. Jane Stewart

In her remarks and the question and answer session that followed, Ms. Stewart welcomed a more active involvement by community colleges in federal policy making and stressed their key role in addressing the skills and learning challenges facing Canada. Among the areas she touched on were:

Influencing the Policy Process

- "One thing you should know about how our party governs is that MPs play an important role. When they stand up in caucus to express their concerns, the Prime Minister is listening – you should connect with them here in Ottawa and out in the ridings."

- "You should make this meeting an annual affair. There are many interesting files that we have to work on together."

Key Human Resource Issues for Canada

- The knowledge-based economy puts a premium on developing human capital and maintaining it through lifelong learning.
- A shrinking youth cohort has significant implications for Canada.
- Increased reliance on immigration to feed our labour force.
- Growing need for infrastructure to assess and recognize prior learning by new Canadians and integrate them quickly into the workforce.
- Even greater emphasis on upgrading skills within the current workforce.
- Canada is facing a real crisis in the supply of skilled trades and we need to boost output from apprenticeship programs.
- Community colleges are leaders in all of these areas.

Priorities in the Skills and Learning Agenda

- Early childhood development programs will ensure that kids are "school-ready," produce better results in the K-12 system and reduce the dropout rate.
- Adult learning is where Canada is very weak. "We need to broaden and deepen current approaches and describe a new adult learning structure for Canada."
- Our performance in workplace training is only average and average is not good enough. The workplace is a "huge part of the adult learning model."

New Approaches to Apprenticeship and Trades Education

- There is a need to integrate trades and academic education.
- An "ideal" apprenticeship program would qualify young people for university entrance

- HRDC could facilitate discussions among colleges and universities to ensure that best practices are shared across Canada.

Sectoral Approaches

- "It just makes sense to approach human resource issues on a sectoral basis."
- Sector Councils are unique Canadian institutions and are keys to our strategy for workforce training particularly in relation to SMEs. We have to broaden and deepen the role of sector councils.
- Community colleges and technical institutes must form partnerships with sector councils and use them as a vehicle to reach SMEs with skills development, applied research and other services.

Where Do We Go From Here?

To wrap up the proceedings, participants were asked to identify opportunities and develop strategies for building stronger partnerships between the federal government and Canada's community colleges. Again, the moderator set the tone by summarizing the two days of discussions and offering advice on how to " get on with the job." Dr. Smith emphasized the need for community college leaders to "come to government with solutions to problems" (e.g. productivity growth, regional and rural development, special needs of aboriginals, etc.) rather than "new problems to put on the list." He urged them to draft programs which were "well costed-out" and unlikely to be "shot down" or "drained" by the provinces. He was optimistic that colleges would be warmly received in Ottawa if they could develop "programs that the federal government can earmark for a defined purpose and put a maple leaf on it." Participants broke into six discussion groups and reported conclusions in the following areas.

What Kind of Relationships Do We Want?

All groups agreed on the need and opportunity for community colleges to move toward the middle of the "federal radar screen" by pursuing common interests across the broad federal policy spectrum. There was a consensus that the colleges and ACCC should approach the government with "costed-out" solutions to problems and be prepared to "manage" any fallout that their interventions may create in the arena of federal-provincial relations.

In addition to federal departments, participants stressed the importance of building linkages to other organizations, such as the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada and the Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities, wherever possible. This would add weight to their arguments by developing coalitions with employers, unions, sector councils and other groups.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Finally, participants warned colleges not to expect there to be "something for everybody" in every activity or program which might result from discussions with federal departments. Indeed, they suggested that for some issues, sub-groupings of colleges (e.g. rural and remote, aboriginal, research oriented, etc.) might be formed under the ACCC banner to pursue collaborative opportunities with the government.

What Tools Do We Need?

Participants agreed that the foundations for effective relationships with the federal government are ongoing, personal contacts by ACCC and individual college leaders with Ministers, MPs, political staff, Deputy Ministers and other senior officials from key departments and central agencies. At the same time, they suggested a number of mechanisms for nurturing personal contacts and building coalitions around specific issues. These included:

- A roundtable session involving college Chairs and Presidents and key Ministers (e.g. HRDC, Industry Canada, Finance) to be held every 18 months.
- Additional conferences involving Ministers and key officials modelled on the September 25-26 meeting.
- Working groups involving ACCC and college leaders, federal officials, employers and other stakeholders in the skills, learning and innovation agenda.
- Customized briefing sessions (organized by ACCC and the agencies) to show specific federal departments and agencies how community colleges can help them to help Canadians.
- A Canada-wide inventory of college programs, services and collaborative initiatives to show federal departments how and where community colleges can assist them in meeting general or specific policy objectives.

Getting Our Message Across

Participants strongly agreed on the need for colleges to paint themselves as "part of the solution" and to approach federal departments with "costed-out" proposals to address the problems and challenges implicit in the government's agenda. More specifically, they described three communications objectives for colleges and ACCC.

- Explaining to students, parents and the public at large that higher education is "a route to a better life."

- Explaining to government departments and funding agencies "what we mean by applied research and development" and pointing out the capacity in the community college system that is not being utilized.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

- Launching a national "branding" campaign that would profile college graduates and explain how the skills which people learn in colleges underpin healthy, prosperous communities.

Ideas to Explore with the Federal Government

Participants saw potential for collaborating with federal departments on a broad range of issues including the following.

Centres of Excellence

Colleges could collaborate with federal departments, employers, sector councils and others to package a range of services (e.g. basic and advanced skills training, technology transfer, applied research, incubation and other management services) aimed primarily at SMEs. Centres would be organized along industry sector lines, but would also support the government's regional development agenda. Centres would be accountable for meeting standards established by funding departments.

A Distance Learning Content Development Centre

Colleges have the expertise but lack the financial resources to develop content for interactive e-learning and other distance learning applications. Federal funding would enable colleges to tailor content to local needs and to share generic content with other colleges across Canada. This would help colleges to manage the financial burden of serving remote communities and might hold potential for export sales.

Chairs In Applied Research

Reiterating that current programs are heavily oriented toward university-based, "pure research," there was broad support for a federally funded network of research chairs in fields where colleges have a comparative advantage over universities such as e-learning and technology transfer.

Expanding Trades Education

Participants identified several opportunities for collaboration between colleges and the federal government to head off the impending "crisis" in the supply of skilled trades people.

One idea was to create a college-based network of "Trades Chairs" to encourage innovation and share best practice approaches to trades education across Canada. A second idea was for colleges, governments and employer groups such as the Chambers of Commerce to pool resources in an advertising campaign to tell young people and their parents about the job prospects and earning potential which skilled trades people will enjoy in the coming years.

Finally, one group suggested a federal program to help colleges integrate trades and academic programs by underwriting the cost of re-deploying faculty from teaching to course development work. New program designs would then be shared among colleges across Canada.

Support for Faculty Training and Curriculum Development

Noting the capacity of colleges to respond quickly to changing workplace demands, one group suggested that because issues such as water management (in the post-Walkerton era) or public security (after September 11) appear on the federal agenda, concerned federal departments could contract colleges to develop courses and certificate programs and train faculty to meet new skill requirements.

Closing the "Development" Gap

Canada's high rates of post-secondary enrolment and the exploding demand for higher order skills do not mask the fact that inadequate literacy and other basic skills keep many adults out of training programs. As one group put it, community colleges have the capacity to "close the development gap and get people to the first step on the escalator where they can start training in earnest." They suggested that HRDC establish a national college-based program to support basic skills development.

Roles and Responsibilities

What should ACCC do?

There was broad agreement that ACCC's lobbying and advocacy work is already helping to put community colleges "onto the federal radar screen" and that these activities should continue in earnest. In terms of specific guidance, participants suggested that ACCC should:

- Cultivate federal champions including Ministers Martin, Stewart and Tobin and their Deputy Ministers.
- Coordinate the representation of community colleges on all sector councils.
- Expand its policy research capacity and use college Presidents as a "policy reference group" to establish ACCC positions on key policy issues.
- Keep colleges posted on its lobbying and advocacy activities.

Several groups concluded that ACCC should strike a series of issue-specific task forces involving senior college officials to establish positions in the following areas:

- innovation and productivity;
- incubation and services to SMEs;
- applied research;
- skills development;
- immigrant settlement;
- literacy and basic skills training; and,
- the needs of rural and remote communities.

It was suggested that these ACCC task forces link to Industry Canada, HRDC and other departments in an effort to influence the next budget in a tangible way.

What Should Individual Colleges and Institutes Do?

Participants clearly felt that ACCC should continue to provide a "unified" voice in Ottawa for community colleges. They suggested several ways in which individual colleges should support ACCC such as taking part in task forces and serving as an early warning system for new skills and learning issues coming out of the workplace. Participants also stressed that behind the unified voice of the ACCC, there was a need for more unified action among individuals. As one group put it: "we need to cooperate across provincial boundaries to meet national objectives," such as e-learning, faculty training and meeting the skills and learning needs of the First Nations.

Response from Claire Morris and Pierre Reid

Ms. Morris and Mr. Reid were clearly encouraged by the constructive tone of the discussions and the practical ideas which participants had tabled. They committed to carrying the group's conclusions back to their departments and colleagues.

By way of next steps, it was proposed that:

- Industry Canada and HRDC jointly approach the regional networks of senior federal executives (known as "federal councils") to organize meetings with college leaders similar to the September 25-26 national meeting.
- "We look at doing this kind of meeting on an annual basis" and think, over the longer term, of bringing together college leaders and key Cabinet Ministers for a roundtable discussion.
- HRDC bring together senior officials from all federal departments involved in post-secondary education for discussions with leaders from ACCC and its member institutions.
- A formal linkage could be established between Industry Canada and ACCC.

Ms. Morris concluded "every one of these ideas I will take back to the department and to my federal colleagues as we flesh out the skills and learning agenda."

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

NOTICE

Reproduction Basis

[X] This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.

[ ] This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").